



Pedro E. Segarra
Mayor



Hartford Among 151 “Playful City USA” Communities ***KaBOOM! RECOGNIZES HARTFORD’S COMMITMENT TO PUTTING FAMILIES FIRST***

HARTFORD, CT/WASHINGTON, D.C. – The City of Hartford has received national recognition and media attention in USA Weekend Magazine for being named a *Playful City USA*.

With only 1-in-5 children in the U.S. currently living within walking distance of a park or playground, 151 cities and towns, including Hartford, earned recognition from national non-profit KaBOOM! as 2011 *Playful City USA* communities for their efforts to increase play opportunities for children. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, play is important to healthy brain development and allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Today’s children spend less time playing outside than any previous generations. This Play Deficit is having profound consequences for kids physically as well as mentally and socially because children need a place to play every day in order to be active and healthy.

A key platform in combating the Play Deficit is *Playful City USA*, a national program advocating for local policies that increase play opportunities for children. KaBOOM!, the national non-profit organization dedicated to saving play, created *Playful City USA* in 2007 to help local governments address the Play Deficit by ensuring their children have the time and space they need to play.

“Parks play a crucial role in the quality of life of our families. From health and exercise to arts and the environment, our parks are fundamental to Hartford families. On behalf of the residents of Connecticut’s Capital City, which is home to several nationally historic parks, I want to thank KaBOOM! for recognizing our commitment to cleaning and improving our parks, our promotion of them as a choice destination for residents and visitors, and our dedication to them as place where families can spend quality and healthy time together. I also want to thank our Parks Manager, Jack Hale, who was instrumental in working with KaBOOM! on securing this important recognition. I look forward to further highlighting our wonderful Capital City Parks System on October 22nd, when we will celebrate *PlayDay* and hundreds of people will participate in the Hartford Bike Tour ,” said Hartford Mayor Pedro E. Segarra.

KaBOOM! selected Hartford for its outstanding dedication to play. Hartford hosted its second annual six-week *Celebrating Our Parks* earlier this year. A combination of park clean-ups and recreational activities, the initiative was extremely popular throughout the city. Hartford and the 150 other *Playful City USA* communities are now eligible for grants via Let’s Play. The first *Let’s Play* initiative is a \$15 million commitment to KaBOOM! that will build or fix about 2,000 playgrounds across America by the end of 2013, benefitting an estimated 5 million children.

“The Play Deficit continues to harm our children and stifle their mental and physical development, while directly facilitating the ongoing childhood obesity crisis,” said Darell Hammond, KaBOOM! founder and CEO and author of *The New York Times* Best Seller *KaBOOM!: How One Man Built a Movement to Save Play*. “These 151 *Playful City USA* communities have joined KaBOOM! in making a collective statement that we will no longer accept the misconception that play is a luxury when the reality is that play is an absolute necessity for children. Hartford is committed to the well-being of children and serves as an outstanding role model for the rest of America as we continue to strive toward the KaBOOM! vision of a great place to play within walking distance of every child.”

For more information on the KaBOOM! *Playful City USA* program visit www.kaboom.org/playfulcityusa.

USA Weekend just posted the online version of the national announcement for Playful City USA. You can view the online version of the article now. Also, make sure to check your local newsstand for the printed copy!

In addition, you can follow Mayor Segarra on Twitter @ HartfordMayor and the City of Hartford on Facebook.